

war machine. We must do so immediately by expanding natural gas production here and our infrastructure here to provide Europe with the promised liquefied natural gas as an alternative to Russian gas.

But, more generally, we have to support all our domestic producers here in the United States through a robust, all-of-the-above energy policy that includes fossil fuels, renewables, carbon-capture technologies, nuclear power, hydropower, hydrogen, and energy efficiency.

Instead of recognizing that Putin is using energy as a weapon and responding appropriately, unfortunately, the Biden administration has acted to make it more difficult for domestic energy production. These actions include an increase of taxes on energy production proposed in the President's budget, restricting new leases on Federal lands and waters for oil and gas production, rewriting the definitions of the "Waters of the United States"—or WOTUS, as it is called—which could add significant time and complexity to permitting new energy projects.

As I raised directly with Secretary Blinken last week during his time before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, these domestic policies that the administration is pursuing are having a direct and negative impact on our national security and the security of our allies abroad. We need to produce more right now to be able to ensure our national security and their national security is protected.

The ruble, the Russian currency, has just about fully recovered from its preinvasion value, in part because Russia is still bringing in revenues from the sale of energy. Our sanctions have left Russia's biggest economic lifeline largely untouched: again, energy sales, specifically to Europe.

In addition to cutting off natural gas and the revenue that fuels the Russian war machine, we need to tighten up bank sanctions as they relate to energy. Sanctions for energy transactions don't go into effect against Russian banks, including the VTB Bank, until June 24. These sanctions should have gone in place weeks ago, and they should certainly go into place now.

President Biden must lead our allies to do whatever it takes to help Ukraine win, and the administration should make clear that their objective is for Ukraine to push the forces of Russia out of the sovereign territory of Ukraine. Remember, Ukrainians are not asking for us to fight for them, but they are asking us to help them fight for themselves. We have got to do that so they have a chance to win.

Last month, I was at the border of Ukraine and Poland, and I was able to talk to a number of Ukrainian refugees. Through their tears, they spoke of their homes being destroyed, their loved ones killed, and the pain of being separated from their husbands and fathers who had stayed behind to fight. Almost every refugee was either a

woman or a child, grandparents with their grandchildren.

I also saw the heroic efforts and the amazing generosity of spirit from the Polish people who were taking these Ukrainian refugees literally into their homes—to feed them, to give them a roof over their head.

Yesterday, I joined my colleagues CHRIS COONS and ROY BLUNT introducing a resolution to commend and recognize Poland's efforts in welcoming Ukrainian refugees and supporting the Ukrainian resistance. Poland has been amazing. Since Russia's invasion began, more than 3 million Ukrainians have fled across the border into Poland. We are so grateful to them for opening their hearts and their homes and for continuing to donate their time and resources to help the refugees.

I want to close my remarks today with talking about why the United States has a special obligation to support Ukraine in light of Russia's brutal and illegal invasion. It is important that we not forget the Budapest Memorandum signed by Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine in 1994. After the fall of the Soviet Union, under this 1994 memorandum, a newly independent Ukraine agreed to give up its nuclear weapons, but they did so in return for an iron-clad commitment from all those signatories—the United States, the UK, and Russia—to respect and ensure Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence.

This is what makes Russia's invasion and veiled threats of nuclear weapons particularly outrageous. Russia made a commitment to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence in exchange for Ukraine giving up its nuclear weapons. Now Russia invaded Ukraine and is threatening to use nuclear weapons against Ukrainians.

This war is in gross violation of the Budapest Memorandum and, of course, Russia's other international commitments, such as the United Nations Charter. For these transgressions, it is now time for the international community to strip Russia of its privilege of sitting on the U.N. Security Council and other bodies of international representation, and Russia should be deemed a state sponsor of terror.

There is reporting that Russia believed the invasion would split and weaken the NATO alliance. Instead, as we have seen, Russia's brutal attacks on a neighboring democracy have actually galvanized and strengthened the resolve of NATO and the free world in general and will likely lead to expansion with Finland and Sweden soon joining the NATO alliance.

What the United States is doing to help Ukraine with military, humanitarian, and economic assistance and rallying our allies to do the same is critically important, particularly at this time, for the battle is at a critical stage. It is critically important—it is important not just because it fulfills

our commitment under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum but because it is in our national interest as the leader of the free world to stand with our allies.

There was a speech once written that was never given. It was meant to be delivered by President John F. Kennedy on the afternoon of November 22, 1963, the day that he was killed. The speech was profound and very simple. It said: We, in this country, in this generation, by destiny rather than choice, are the watchmen on the walls of world freedom—by destiny rather than choice.

When democracies are under attack by authoritarian regimes, history says when America leads, others will join, and we are victorious in protecting freedom.

In this instance, in this critical point in Ukraine, we must continue to lead the free world in standing with Ukraine until their final victory.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

#### UNIONS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I appreciate being recognized.

I want to start with a short little story. A month after—well, maybe 2 weeks after—President Biden took office, I was invited as the new chair of a major Senate Committee, the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee. I think the Presiding Officer was there that day, too. We met in the Oval Office with the President of the United States.

We sat in a semicircle, and I saw that the painting behind President Biden was of Franklin Roosevelt. He was surrounded by busts of Harry Truman, Rosa Parks, Dr. King, Cesar Chavez, and Robert Kennedy. He asked us to go around the room and tell what interests us, what kind of things we should be doing.

When it was my turn, I talked about the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, and I talked about the child tax credit, which, after we passed it, it was a \$3,000 tax cut to 92 percent of the families in my State and a similar percent in the Presiding Officer's State of Michigan. Families with children received a \$3,000 tax cut, the biggest in American history.

I spoke about housing, and then I said, at the end of my little minute and a half: Mr. President, thank you for talking about unions.

He kind of smiled and said: Of course.

When the meeting was over, after 45 minutes or so, the President walked toward me and said: Why wouldn't I mention unions?

I said: Mr. President, I have been in this office a number of times over the last 25 years, and I have never heard a President talk about the unions the way you do.

That was the beginning. We then passed the recovery act and have done so much more with the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

He has always put the emphasis on workers, putting workers at the center

of our economic policy and workers at the center of our country and at the center of our economy.

Let me illustrate. In the last 2 weeks—I know that Senator HASSAN, who is about to preside today, when she went back to New Hampshire during these 2 weeks, she was talking to families and workers, and Senator PETERS, who is presiding, from Michigan, did the same—what struck me is that we had four sort of Cabinet-level people from the Biden administration who came to Ohio during these couple of weeks. I was with three of them. With one of them, we couldn't work out schedules.

The head of the EPA was in Ohio. Do you know what he talked about? He talked about how we replace—Ohio, unfortunately, is No. 2 in the country in the number of contaminated pipes connecting main water lines going into people's homes, contaminated with lead. We are, because of the bipartisan infrastructure bill, going to replace those 600,000 pipes. We are going to replace them with U.S., Made-in-America iron and steel and other components, because in infrastructure, we passed the strongest—and Senator HASSAN was part of this and others. We passed the strongest “Buy America” provisions ever in American history. If you are going to spend American tax dollars, you are going to hire American workers to do that.

Administrator Regan of the EPA talked about what that means. It means thousands of jobs for pipefitters and other union trades people. It also means clean water going into moderate- and low-income families' homes in Appalachia and East Cleveland and everywhere in between. And that means healthier children.

Then the Secretary of the Department of Labor came. The Department of Labor Secretary with President Biden's predecessor was essentially a corporate lawyer. I would use the word—this might sound disrespectful, and I apologize ahead of time—a hack. Fundamentally, he was a guy who spent his career making, I assume, millions of dollars a year working for a prestigious law firm, busting unions, and always siding with employers and with big corporations against workers. That was the predecessor.

The Secretary of Labor under President Biden came out of Boston. He was a former laborer. He was a former union laborer. Make that contrast. Then I spent part of the time in Lakewood, a Cleveland suburb—in the city of Cleveland and in Lakewood—and then Fremont, OH, with the new Chair of the Export-Import Bank, talking about jobs, talking about workers, talking about getting help competing with the Chinese, with the Export-Import Bank, always with an emphasis on wages.

We know what has happened the last 50 years. I went to high school and walked the halls of Mansfield Senior High School and Johnny Appleseed

Junior High School with the sons and daughters of machinists who worked at Ohio Brass, of electrical workers who worked at Westinghouse, of auto-workers who worked at GM, of rubber workers who worked at Mansfield Tire, and with the sons and daughters of laborers and operating engineers, millwrights, carpenters, pipefitters, painters, and electricians—all making middle-class union wages that really built a decent economy for tens of thousands of families in my community.

I know what that meant, and then we saw corporate leaders: First they shut down production in places like Mansfield, my hometown, or Springfield or Toledo. They moved to Alabama or Tennessee or Arkansas—low wages, few unions, weak unemployment compensation, sort of inadequate unemployment workers' compensation programs for injured and unemployed workers.

But those wages weren't low enough. So these same corporate leaders went on a scavenger hunt to Mexico and China—all over the world—to try to find the cheapest labor possible.

And do you know what? Far too many Presidents and far too many people in this body helped them do that. That is why this President is so important and why this Senate is so important—that we can fight back.

We are seeing now that the whole idea of this administration is to begin to bring these jobs back home and treat these workers with respect and begin, again, to rebuild the middle class.

The last Cabinet Secretary to come in who I spent a full day with was in Chillicothe, OH, in southern Ohio. It is a small community hurt by globalization. There is a VA hospital. It is one of the oldest VA hospitals in the country. And these workers—there was a Commission started by President Trump that is slating the closure of the Chillicothe VA.

Today, Presiding Officer Senator HASSAN and I were in the Veterans' Committee asking about workers—with Senator TESTER presiding and Senator BOOZMAN, a good bipartisan team on Veterans' Affairs—what do we do to make sure these workers are whole, that we train workers, that they are not burning out by all the tension and the pressure and the anxiety they face now?

In sitting with Secretary Denis McDonough, the new Secretary of the VA, the Biden Secretary of the VA, it was a pleasure watching him interact with these workers, interacting with Jessica Fee, who is the union president, at Chillicothe, the American Federation of Government Employees. President Kelley, the international president, was there. Ms. Simon, his assistant, was there, listening to these workers, listening to what do we do to train enough LPNs, licensed practical nurses? What do we do to train enough nurses? What do we do to train enough physical therapists? And how do we

keep this hospital open? Because so many veterans care so deeply about this hospital.

So the last 2 weeks what motivates me in this job is my job really, in so many ways, is how do you speak for those who don't have a voice? How do you fight for those—it is always whom you fight for and what you fight against. I am not interested in opposing Senator MCCONNELL because he blocks a whole bunch of stuff that we care about. I am not interested in opposing him; I am interested in fighting against some of the things he does.

But I am interested in fighting for these workers at the VA. I am interested in fighting for these pipefitters who are going to lay these clean pipes without lead contamination, making these children in Appalachian Ohio, in East Cleveland, in East Columbus, OH—making them more whole. I am interested in helping these workers who DOL finally sides with instead of siding with corporate interest.

During these 2 weeks, I went to a Starbucks in Columbus, and these workers are trying to organize a union. They know that carrying a union card—carrying a union card means better wages; it means better benefits; it means more control over your work schedule. Of course, Starbucks is fighting the union, but finally we have a government that is helping these small businesses export more. And we have a government that is going to finally side with veterans and side with workers at VA hospitals.

The last 2 weeks is—and for me it has been a celebration, as Studs Terkel said in an introduction of a book called, “Christ in Concrete,” a book written in the late 1930s about an immigrant worker. It came out the same week as “Grapes of Wrath,” and, interestingly, it was chosen over “Grapes of Wrath” for the Book-of-the-Month Club, even though “Grapes of Wrath” had a little bit more staying power.

But Studs Terkel talked in his introduction about celebrating the uncelebrated, and that is really what we should be doing here. You celebrate those workers. It is not the corporations; it is not the President; it is not the big shots; it is really the workers who power this economy, the workers who make the VA work, the workers who will lay those pipes, the workers who are the small business people succeeding and competing with China in countries around the world, the workers at the VA.

That is what the last 2 weeks for me was about. It is why the honor of having this job and fighting for these workers gets me up every day.

I yield the floor.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a